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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

CLASSICAL ART

FIFTH CENTURY ROOM

COINS OF SYRACUSE

III

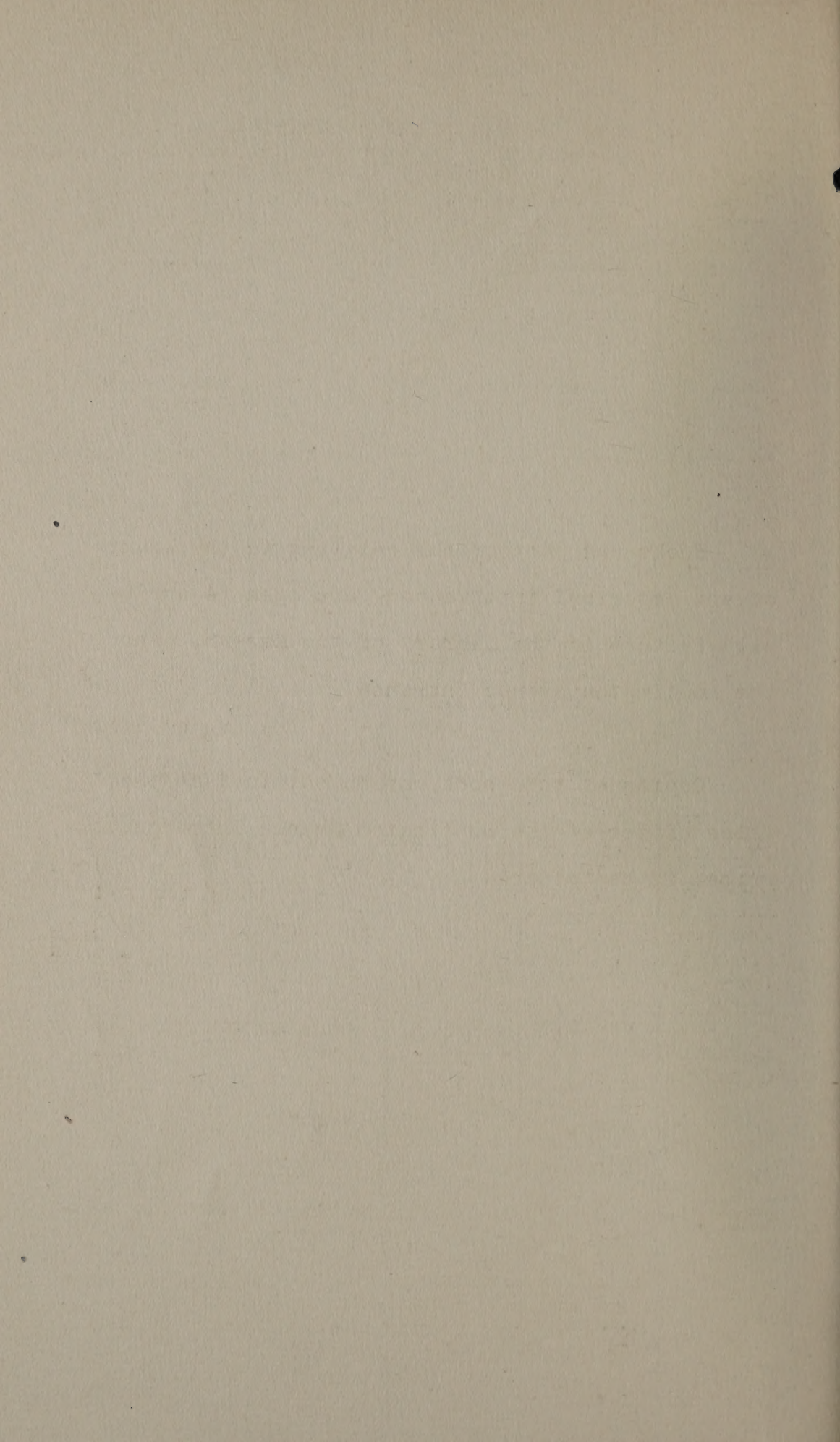
CLASSICAL ART

Fifth century room:
Coins of Syracuse

Department of Classical Art
Gallery Guide no. 2

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THE COINS OF SYRACUSE.

"Syracuse was the richest and most populous city of Ancient Greece. It began to coin money about 500 B. C., and during a period of three hundred years issued a continuous series of coins unrivalled for variety and beauty by those of any other town. The gradual development of the art of coining in a single state is best illustrated by these coins."

The Museum is fortunate in possessing a remarkably complete series of Syracusan coins. Of the 144 specimens now shown in the Fifth Century Room, 30 are from the Catharine Page Perkins Collection acquired in 1895, 1897 and 1900; 19 are from the Bartlett Collection (1903); 94 are from the Greenwell-Warren Collection, most of them purchased in 1904 from the bequest of Henry L. Pierce, some acquired since from the James Fund; one specimen is a gift of Mr. E. A. Wyeth.

The coins are arranged as follows:

- Section 6. Two coins of about 500 B. C.
Twenty-seven coins of the time of Gelon, 485-478 B. C.
" 7. Twenty-five coins of the time of Hieron, 478-467 B. C.
" 8. Thirty-seven coins of the period from 467-413 B. C.
" 9. Twenty-four coins of the period from 412 to about 385 B. C.
" 10. Twenty-nine coins of the period from 344-212 B. C.

The following classification is based on Head, on the Chronological Sequence of the Coins of Syracuse, except for Nos. 74-115, which are arranged more nearly according to the system of Evans, Syracusan Medallions and their Engravers. The opening paragraph above and the description of the kylix exhibited in a glass case above Section 9 are quoted from the "Guide to the Catharine Page Perkins Collection of Greek and Roman Coins."

This exhibition has also been described with illustrations in the Museum Bulletin, Vol. VIII., 1910, No. 47.

I. The Earliest Coins, about 500 B. C.

- 1, 2. Two tetradrachms.

Obverse. A quadriga to the right, the horses, moving at a walk, driven by a male chariot-eer wearing a long chiton. The horses are represented in two pairs, the further one of each pair being indicated only in outline beside the nearer one. In the field above, the inscription or dots. The whole in a circle of dots.

Reverse. An incuse square divided into four parts. In the centre, a circular depression in which is a small archaic female head in profile to left.

II. Gelon, Tyrant of Syracuse, 485-478 B. C.

3-6, 9-11,
13-25, 28-29. Tetradrachms.

Obverse. Similar to I., except that a small figure of Nike is introduced, flying in the field above, crowning the horses.

Reverse. An archaic female head (Arethusa?) in profile to right (to left on No. 9) surrounded by four dolphins and the inscription . In the earliest examples the head is in a circle (4,5) and the letter (koppa) is used in name instead of K (3-6 and the didrachms 7, 8). The eye is rendered as if seen from the front. The hair falls simply upon the shoulder, or is tucked up behind under the fillet. In the earlier specimens the separate strands are indicated by dotted lines (3-13); later by incised lines, straight or wavy.

7, 8, 12. Didrachms.

Obverse. A nude male horseman leading a second horse, which is indicated in outline beside the first.

Reverse. Similar to that of the tetradrachms.

26. Drachma.

Obverse. A horseman, as on the didrachms, but without the second horse.

Reverse. Like that of the tetradrachms, but without the dolphins.

27. Litra (1/5 of a drachma).

Obverse. Female head.

Reverse. Cuttle-fish.

The Museum possesses no example of the ten drachma or fifty litra pieces (Pentekonta-litra) issued in celebration of the victory of the Carthaginians at Himera in 480 B. C., and called "Demareteia" in honor of Demarete, the wife of Gelon, who interceded for the Carthaginians and was presented by them with a wreath of gold, out of the proceeds of which the coins were made. Tetradrachms with the same types as the Demareteian

dekadrachms were also issued, and of these No. 28 is an example.

28.

Obverse. Quadriga. In the exergue, a lion, perhaps a symbol of the African foe, Carthage.

Reverse. Female head (Nike?) wearing a laurel wreath. The rendering of the eye is more advanced than on any of the preceding specimens.

29. The reverse of No. 29 is of this type, but the obverse lacks the lion in the exergue.

III. Hieron, 478-467 B. C.

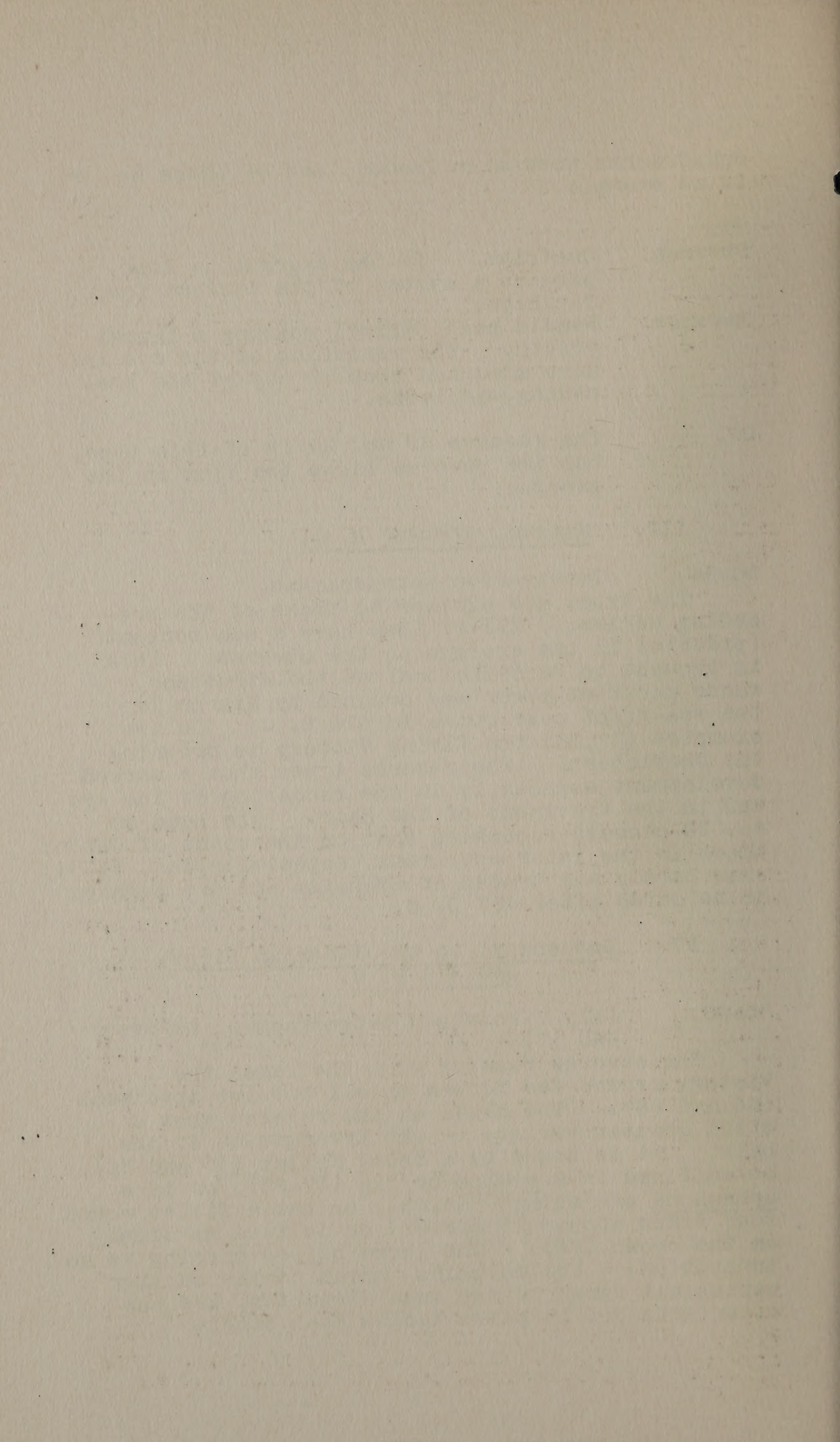
30-54. Twenty-five tetradrachms.

The types are similar to those of the preceding series. All of them have a sea-serpent (pistrix) in the exergue on the obverse. This is thought to be symbolical of the Etruscans, whose maritime power was crushed by Hieron in the sea-fight near Cumae in 474 B. C. On two examples (31, 33) the flying Victory is crowning the charioteer. The reverse types show a marked development especially in the rendering of the eye and in the treatment of the hair. The head on No. 30 closely resembles that on the coins of Gelon; those in the later specimens, especially Nos. 51-54, show hardly any traces of archaism and are perhaps to be dated after 467 B. C.

IV. Democracy, to the Athenian Siege, 466-413 B. C.

55-68. (a). Fourteen tetradrachms, before 440 (?).

The obverse remains much the same; the Victory crowns the horses on all but two specimens (64 and 68). The heads on the reverse show a still greater variety in the arrangement of the hair. It is bound by a broad fillet (55 and 56), or confined in a sakkos or bag (57-63), or in a sphendoné or "sling" (64, 65), or has a fillet wound four times around it (66, 67) or is tied up simply on the crown (68). The large coiled earring is an innovation. The dolphins, which on the earlier series all faced in the same direction, are now often arranged in pairs facing each other.



69-73. (b). Five gold coins.

At some time during the last third of the fifth century the coinage of gold was introduced. The fifty litra pieces (69-71) have a head of Herakles wearing the lion skin on the obverse, and on the reverse a tiny female head, in the centre of an incuse square in imitation of the reverse of the earliest silver coins (1,2). The types of the twelve litra piece are: obverse, a helmeted head of Athena, reverse, a facing head of Medusa.

74, 76-83. (c). Signed tetradrachms.

About 440 B. C. the coin engravers began to sign their work. The earliest of these signed coins are by Eumenos. The activity of Eukleidas and of Evaenetos began about 425 B. C. A list of these coins with their engravers follows:

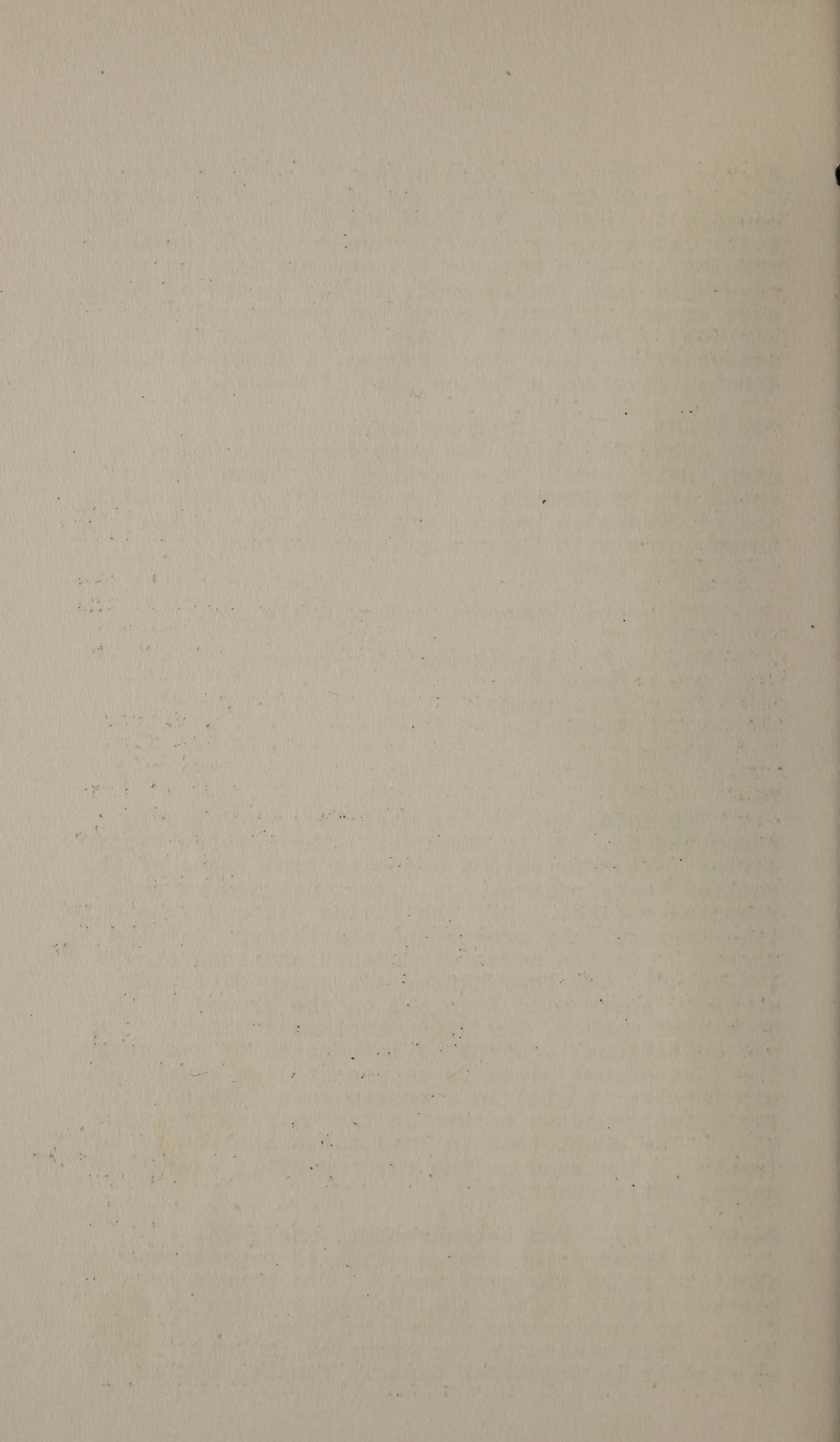
74.	Eumenos.		
76.	"		
77.	Obv. Eumenos.	Rev. Eukleidas.	
78.	" "	" "	
79.	" Evaenetos.	" Eumenos.	
80.	Evaenetos.		
81.	Eukleidas.		
82.	Evaenetos.		
83.	"		

75.

The coin, No. 75, is unsigned, but closely resembles No. 74, by Eumenos. The obverse types differ in two important respects from those of the earlier tetradrachms. 1. The quadriga is represented racing. 2. The flying victory from this time on regularly crowns the charioteer, not the horses. On the coins of Eumenos and some others (74-78, 83) the four horses are shown galloping abreast, their hind legs all on the ground in an unnatural manner, and with monotonous effect. A new sensational feature is introduced by Evaenetos. The furthestmost horse is represented as stumbling, his foreleg tangled in a broken rein. (79,80,82). Two dolphins often appear in the exergue (79-81, 83). The charioteer in some cases appears to be female. The head on the reverse still wears the heavy, coiled earring.

84-93. (d). Ten tetradrachms, unsigned.

On these coins the quadriga is represented as about to round the goal post. The horses are represented in pairs, the two nearer ones in profile, the further one almost in front view. The broken rein occurs on two examples (85,91). The charioteer is sometimes clearly female, and is



probably Persephone as she holds a torch instead of a goad (88,89,92,93). In the exergue is a dolphin (84-86) or an ear of barley (87-93). The coiled earring is still worn by the head on the reverse, except on 92, 93. The position of the earring shows that the head on No. 93 is intended to lean forwards, as it would be if the figure were represented flying; it is therefore the head of the goddess Nike.

V. Democracy after the Athenian Siege,

413-406 B. C.

Tyranny of Dionysius, 406-367 B. C.

94-107. (a). Fourteen dekadrachms.

These coins commemorate the final victory over the invading Athenian army on the banks of the river Assinarus in the summer of 413 B. C. They were probably first coined in 412 in connection with the newly established games, the Assinaria, held on the anniversary of the victory. The cuirass, helmet, greaves and shield, which appear in the exergue on the obverse with the inscription (prizes) point to a definite connection with the games. The horses are represented in full career, driven by a female charioteer who is crowned by the flying Nike. The earliest issues are the work of Kimon (94-96). On the reverse is the head of Arethusa in profile to left, her hair confined in a jewelled net. The signature appears in abbreviated form on the ampyx or head band (94,95) and on the dolphin below the neck (94). The dekadrachms by Evaenetos (97-107) were issued through a long period beginning perhaps with the year 406 B. C. The obverse type is similar to that of Kimon. The reverse has a head of Persephone with a wreath of barley leaves in her hair. The artist's signature may be seen on two examples (106,107). The fame of these dekadrachms which have been called "the chef d'oeuvre of the art of coin-engraving" is shown by the numerous copies of the head of Persephone on later Greek coins issued in Sicily, Southern Italy and even Greece proper. The type appears on Carthaginian camp coins struck in Sicily and from the middle of the fourth century on the coins of Carthage herself, and its influence can be traced on coins of Gaul and even of early Britain. (See Evans, Syracusan medallions, pp. 106 ff). A further proof of the fame of these coins is afforded by the vase exhibited in the glass case above. "This is a plain, black-glazed earthenware kylix decorated only by a medallion in the centre. Careful attention shows this to be a reproduction of one of the dekadrachms of Evaenetos. An impression of a dekadrachm was

made in some material, and by pressing clay into this mould, a copy of the coin was obtained. The rim of this reproduction was cut away to fit it for its place; and in the process, the lower part of the signature of the artist was sacrificed; the upper half of the abbreviated name is still visible beneath the dolphin that is under the neck of Persephone. The reduction of the size of the coin is emphasized by the natural shrinking of the clay in the process of manufacture. The kylix seems from its shape, and especially its twisted handles, to have been made in imitation of a bronze vessel, and it may be noticed that the artist has endeavored, by the use of a silver colored glaze, to give the medallion the appearance of a silver coin. The vase was made probably at Capua, not far from Naples; and is therefore of Italian fabric, and not Sicilian. Its date must be placed some time in the fourth century B. C., not many years later, it is probable, than the issue of the coin."

108-110. (b) Three tetradrachms by Kimon,
410-409 B. C.

The first (108) has a head of Arethusa in profile as on the dekadrachms of the same artist. On the two others (109, 110) the nymph is represented in full face, "the flowing locks suggesting, though they do not directly imitate, the bubbling action of the fresh-water spring which rises in the sea, here typified by the dolphins which sport round the head of the nymph" (Sir C. T. Newton). The obverse resembles that on Nos. 84-93)

111. (c). Tetradrachm by Parme-(nides?)
413-405 B. C.

Obverse, like the above.

Reverse, head of Arethusa in profile to left.

112. (d). Drachma.

Obverse. Facing head of Athena wearing an Attic helmet with high crest. Similar to a tetradrachm by Eukleidas which is contemporary with the facing head of Arethusa by Kimon.

Reverse. The hero Leukaspis advancing to the right, armed with helmet, shield and spear. Behind him an altar.

113. (a) Litra by Evaenetos.

Obverse. Head of Arethusa in profile to left.

Reverse. Cuttle-fish. Compare No. 27.

114, 115. (f). Two gold coins, about 408 B. C.
100 litrae.

Obverse. Head of Arethusa.

- Reverse. Herakles wrestling with the Nemean lion. Some examples are signed by Kimon and Evaenetos.
50 litrae.
Obverse. Head of a young river god.
Reverse. Prancing horse.

VI. Time of Timoleon and the restored Democracy, 344-317.

116-123. Timoleon was sent from Corinth in 344 in response to an appeal of the Syracusans. In seven years he restored order and prosperity in that city. It is probable that he introduced, as a device to facilitate the payment of debts, the coinage of electrum (a mixture of gold and silver). These coins were accepted as gold, and as they contained about 20% of silver, a considerable saving was effected. The silver didrachms or staters with Corinthian types (122, 123) were perhaps also introduced in this period, though Evans would place them some years earlier.

116. (a). Electrum coins.

(1). 100 litrae.

Obverse. Head of Apollo, laureate, in profile to left. Lyre behind.

Reverse. Head of Artemis Soteira in profile to right. Quiver and lyre behind.

117-120. (2). 50 litrae.

Obverse. Similar to the above.

Reverse. Tripod.

121. (3). 30 litrae.

Obverse. Head of Zeus Eleutherios in profile to left.

Reverse. Pegasus prancing.

122,123. (b). Two silver didrachms.

Obverse. Pegasus prancing.

Reverse. Head of Athena in profile to right wearing Corinthian helmet.

VII. Agathokles, 317-289 B. C.

124-135.

The democracy restored by Timoleon did not last long. In 317 Agathokles who had been named general of the city, proclaimed himself despot. In 307 he assumed the title of king. His gradual increase in power is illustrated by his coins. In the first period, 317-310, his name does not occur, but the triskeles symbolizes his ambition to be

regarded as the ruler of the whole of Sicily. The name occurs in the second series, 310-307, and after the latter date with the title, Basileus.

- (a) 317-310 B. C.
 124,125. (1) Gold.
 60 litrae.
 Obverse. Head of Apollo or Ares in profile to left.
 Reverse. Biga racing to right. In the field below the horses, a triskeles.
126. 4 obols.
 Similar types.
127. 2 obols.
 Obverse. Head of Persephone, imitated from the dekadrachms of Evaenetos.
 Reverse. Bull, to left.
- 128-130. (2). Silver.
 Three tetradrachms.
 Types like the tetradrachms of Evaenetos.
 A triskeles in the field above the horses.
131. Didrachm.
 Corinthian types. A griffin on the helmet of Athena. A triskeles below the pegasus.
- (b). 310-307 B. C.
 Two tetradrachms.
 132,133. Obverse. Head of Persephone in profile to right.
 Reverse. Winged Nike erecting a trophy. A triskeles, and the name ,
 "of Agathokles" in the field.
- (c). 307-289 B. C.
 Gold, 80 litrae.
 134. Obverse. Head of Athena in Corinthian helmet.
 Reverse. Thunderbolt and the inscription
 "of King Agathokles."
135. Silver, didrachm.
 Corinthian types. An eight-pointed star in the field above the pegasus.

VIII. Hiketas, 287-278 B. C.

After an interval of two years under a democratical government Hiketas established himself as despot. His rule is represented by one gold coin of the weight of a drachma.

136.
Obverse. Head of Persephone, after Evaenetos.
Reverse. Biga racing to right. Beneath, the inscription , "in the rule of Hiketas."

IX. Hieron II., 275-216 B. C.

- 137-141. The period of three years (278-276) in which Pyrrhus of Epirus was active in Sicily is not represented among the coins in the collection. In 275 Hieron, a young Syracusan officer, was made general, and five years later received the title of king. To his long and peaceful reign the following coins are to be ascribed:

- 137, 138. Two gold drachmas.
Obverse. Head of Persephone in profile to left.
Reverse. Biga racing. Beneath, the inscription , "of Hieron."

- 139, 140. Silver.
Two pieces of 16 litrae.
Obverse. Head of Philistis, wife of Hieron, in profile to left.
Reverse. Quadriga, driven by Nike, racing to right. , "of Queen Philistis."

141. Piece of 5 litrae.
Similar types.

X. Democracy, 215-212 B. C.

- 142-144. Hieron was succeeded by his grandson Hieronymos, who was assassinated after one year's reign. The following three coins belong to the democracy which followed.

142. Silver, 16 litrae.
Obverse. Head of Zeus, in profile to left.
Reverse. Quadriga racing to right, with the inscription , " of the Syracusans."

143. Silver, 12 litrae.
Obverse. Head of Athena wearing Corinthian helmet, in profile to left.
Reverse. Artemis as huntress with quiver, bow and arrow, and dog.

144. Silver, 1 1/2 obols.

Obverse. Head of Artemis in profile to left.

Reverse. Owl.

With the fall of Syracuse in 212 B. C., after the two years' siege by the Romans under Metellus, the independent coinage of gold and silver came to an end. Two years later the whole of Sicily was made a Roman province.

1915,

